Aalieh, Mount Lebanon,
Sept. 4, 1834.

To the Society of Inquiry on Mission, &c.
Theological Seminary, Princeton.

Dear Brethren,

While at Constantinople last year, I rec'd a very kind letter from your Secretary, Bro. Townley, which ought long since to have been answered. I could offer some plausible excuses; but I have not time to make excuses: and if I had, it would be better at once to own that I am in fault, and proceed to perform the duty I have too long neglected. I beg you to accept the assurance that tho' I am but a poor correspondent, I am sincerely thankful for your letter. I love your Seminary, and am interested in every thing I learn respecting the town & neighborhood of Princeton. I have not seen your faces, but I know the rooms and seats which you occupy, the walks & groves which you frequent, the studies you pursue, & the respected & beloved Professors to whose invaluable instructions you listen. I know something of your spiritual trials and comforts, and of your hopes & fears in relation to the great & sacred work before you; and I love to think of you all as my brethren in Christ Jesus. I love to pray for you, & to look upon you as the future preachers of the glorious Gospel. I love to cherish the hope that I may yet see many of your names on our list of missionaries, and perhaps may one day greet some of you as my fellow laborers in this portion of our Lord's vineyard.

Had I time to give you a full history of our little mission for the last few months, it would no doubt be interesting to you. But I must limit myself to the statement of a few facts.

On my return from Constantinople, in March last, after a year's absence, a considerable change for the better in the state of things at Beyroot was perceptible. The mission had evidently been gaining influence among the people — our schools had increased in number, & improved in character — a temperance society was in existence — our meetings on the Sabbath, both for English and Arabic preaching, were increasingly interesting —

and though we saw no real conversions taking place, our prospects were on the whole brightening. Since that time, (until quite recently) our affairs have continued in much the same state at Beyroot; but the other branch of our mission, that at Jerusalem, has been very deeply afflicted. In May, a spirited rebellion broke out in all the hill country of Judea, which it required the utmost power & wisdom of the government, and a great deal of hard fighting, to subdue. During this war, the city of Jerusalem was besieged, and at length taken & pillaged by the rebels. Our friends there, in common with all the inhabitants, suffered much during the seige, and especially while the rebels had possession of the city. They also suffered greatly from an earthquake which took place about the beginning of these disturbances, and by which their house was terribly shaken & nearly thrown down. But their greatest affliction occurred after the war had ceased, and quietness & peace had been restored. I refer to the death of our beloved sister Mrs Thomson, which took place in July. Bro. Thomson had himself a violent attack of Cholera at the same time, and the family of Mr Nicolayson was also visited with severe illness. Since their partial recovery we have heard of the dangerous illness of Mr N. himself, and are at the present time waiting with anxiety for further intelligence from him. Bro Thomson has visited us since his bereavement, and we have advised him to remove, with his motherless babe, to Beyroot. He is now at Jerusalem in company with Dr. Dodge, making arrangements for the removal of two of our families thither, who hope to go before the rest with.

For full account of the late disturbances, and also of the sickness and death of Mrs Thomson, I must refer you to the communications of our afflicted brother, which are forwarded to America at the present time, and will doubtless soon appear in the public prints.

Many inquiries are proposed in your letter, dear brethren, a few of which I will endeavor to answer as well as I can; but I beg you will excuse me for expressing my thoughts as they rise, without regard to order, and for leaving many of the subjects mentioned

entirely untouched. To do justice to all of them, would require a little volume, instead of a letter.

Your first question, which indeed comprehends in it many of the others, relates to the peculiar qualifications necessary to a missionary in Syria. This subject alone opens a wide field. I would remark in the first place, that the population of Syria & Palestine consists principally of Christians, Mussulmans, Druses, and Jews. The Christians, who constitute perhaps one half of the entire population, are divided into several sects, the chief of which are the Maronites, the orthodox or proper Greeks, and the papal Greeks, or Greek Catholics, as they are often called. The Maronites, who are the most numerous class of people on Mount Lebanon, are very bigoted, jealous, intolerant papists. The papal Greeks are not numerous, but in proportion to their numbers they are the most wealthy, and perhaps the most intelligent people in the country; and they are scarcely less hostile to protestant missionaries than are the Maronites. The people of the proper Greek Church, who are very numerous, and far more accessible to our influence than any other class of people in the country, are nevertheless, as a body, very much given to superstitious forms, and very destitute of the true spirit of religion. The traditions of their fathers are of more practical influence and authority with them, by far, than the precepts and doctrines of the word of God. Among all these Christian sects, there are men of much party zeal, and of considerable sagacity. They are fond of disputing, and had rather at any time contend about some idle dogma of their sect, than converse upon the vital truths of the Gospel, or listen to an admonition on the subject of personal religion.

It is obvious, therefore, that a missionary living among them ought to be well acquainted with the Catholic controversy, and with

the subjects which divide the Eastern & Western Churches.# It is of immense importance too, that he should have a talent for giving to all religious discussions & conversations a practical turn, & should be able to lead the minds of people away from all strifes about words & names, and every thing that is unprofitable & vain, and to keep the attention fixed upon those truths which take hold of the conscience, and are connected with eternal life. No person who has not mingled with such a people as this, knows how difficult a matter this is. — A careful acquaintance with the history, ecclesiastical & civil, of all the countries lying around the Mediterranean, particularly the Levant countries, is of much importance. The writings of modern travelers in these countries, and also the history of protestant & catholic missions in them, should be attentively read. — It is, of course, desirable that the missionary in this country should be well versed in the Sciences, and able to teach them. It is well also if he has had experience in teaching. Schools are to be formed and superintended, and teachers to be trained. Elementary Books too are to be prepared. — It is extremely important to have a talent for languages. Without this, a man will scarcely conquer the Arabic alone, which is the principal language of the country. Mr Jowett well remarks that five years is too short a time for the acquisition of this language. At least, it is too short a time for those who have as many other avocations & as many interruptions as all missionaries in this country have hitherto had. Besides the Arabic, the Italian must be learned; and in Jerusalem the Turkish & Modern Greek also.

As the missionary will often come in contact with Mussulmans & Jews (& we hope the door of access to them will open wider & wider,) he ought obviously to understand the controversies with both these classes of men, as well as their history. — It is unnecessary to add, that he should be a thorough Hebrew scholar

One qualification which I would set down as indispensable, is good bodily health. Let no man come to this country with a feeble constitution, or a feeble wife. On this subject I speak strongly, for painful experience has taught me its importance. Not that the climate is unhealthy. It is not so. Yet it is, to almost all foreigners, extremely debilitating. Even strong constitutions, without great care are in danger of breaking down; and when once prostrated, ten to one they will not recover their vigor again without a change of climate, if ever. While those who come out with feeble constitutions, must lay their account for many long & painful interruptions in their work, and very probably for repeated voyages & journeys in quest of health. And when languages are to be learned, fields of labor extending & ripening, & the laborers so distressingly few, such interruptions be found are trying, to a degree known only to those who have experienced them.

It is very desirable that missionaries in this country, (and ~~probably in any country~~) whether male or female, should be persons of cheerful temperament, and of kind & pleasing address. They should have a large share of patience. They should be prepared for difficulties & discouragements, & willing to toil hard & long, even if they see but little present fruit of their labors. — I need not add, that they should be persons of much faith, humility & prayer. A missionary who does not walk with God, is perhaps of all men most miserable.

And now, dear brethren, I must tell you, in conclusion that we are weak handed; and we greatly wish that some of you would come over & help us. It is true, we cannot point you to

a field so vast, nor so inviting perhaps, as is presented to your contemplation in India, or in China. But we can show you one where you may find, (what you all doubtless expect,) hard work, many trials, rich consolations, & if faithful unto death, a large reward. — I have already intimated that two of the families now stationed at Beyroot expect to remove soon to Jerusalem. The station at B. will then need to be strengthened. There is work enough at this station & its vicinity to employ at least four missionaries, and more encouraging prospects than we have had at any former period. We ought also to have a station at Damascus, and another in Cyprus, not to speak of other places repeatedly mentioned in our published communications. The door is opening wider & wider in all these countries. Shall we not enter in and possess the land? How can we, unless our brethren in America come to our aid? Brethren, will not some of you come? It is a good work to which we invite you. It is an honorable & glorious work. And it is a happy work. I testify to you, that whatever may be its trials, it is a work in which your brethren & sisters here are contented & happy. — But perhaps you are looking with desire towards the far East — to China, or the country of the Mahrattas, or to the dark shores of Africa. If so, far from me be the wish to turn your attention thence. If so, God will hear your prayers, and help you, I doubt not, whoever among you is attentively surveying those vast fields, & honestly inquiring, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? The loud calls which have reached you from those countries within the last two years, I am persuaded have touched your hearts. How many of you have resolved to go forth to the Gentiles? You are perhaps 120 in number. Will less than 30 — that is, one fourth of those now connected with the seminary — offer themselves

for the foreign service? Will less than that proportion, think you, answer the demand which the great Head of the Church is now making upon your institution? Will less than this meet the reasonable expectations of the Churches? Shall the spirit of missions be more lively in the heart of your pious people generally, than in those who are required to go before them, and to be examples to them in every thing good? If so, will not the Churches by & bye be discouraged? What feelings does it awaken in your bosoms, dear brethren, when you hear the Board of Foreign Missions, looking to God & the Churches for support, pledging themselves to send out all suitable persons who offer themselves for the missionary work — when the Churches, by their generous contributions, sustain the Board in this noble effort — and when, notwithstanding it is continually proclaimed that the only reason why such & such missions are not extended, and such & such new missions undertaken, is the want of men?

But I must close. Dear Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may soon have free course & be glorified in Syria and Palestine, even as it is with you. May the Lord direct & bless you in all your inquiries, and, if it be His blessed will, give to many of you the happy privilege of preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!

Your brother & fellow servant
in the Lord,
Geo. B. Whiting

P.S. One of the inquiries of Br Sowney was whether a missionary who has learned any mechanical art, especially a carpenter, would do well to bring his tools with him. To this I would say yes, by all means bring them. — Whoever comes to Syria would do well to procure, or order from Germany, Freytag's Arabic Lexicon, & Rosenmuller's Arab. Grammar — or, if he reads French, De Sacy's Grammar, and at all events his Arab. Chrestomathy. I would not advise one to study Arabic until he arrives in the country where it is spoken.

To the

"Committee on Foreign Missions"

Theological Seminary

Princeton, N. Jersey.

U. S. A.

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